critical digest

VOL. III NO. 44 July 9, 1951

The weekly Newsletter Digest of the Current New York Theatre Scene

N.Y.Rehearsals Due Soon

Lace on Her Petticoat-Booth. Due first week in September. Scottish comedy by Aimee Stuart, produced by Herman Shumlin...Cross Your Fingers Due to open week of September 17. Mann Moliner and Alberta Nichols musical produced by Arthur Klein... Top Banana Due week of September 24. Michael Sloane and Paula Stone present new musical by H.S.Kraft and Johnny Mercer starring Phil Silvers.

Digests of Current Reviews

Seventeen-Broadhurst, 6/22/51. Weekly reviewers split their votes on Berle-Lambert-Foyer musical adaptation of Booth Tarkington's novel. Kahn, Variety, Francis Billboard, and Keating, Cue, welcomed young talented cast in nostalgic book written by Sally Benson. Ann Crowley and Kenneth Nelson in the leads won most praise, though entire supporting cast was lauded. Staging by Richard Whorf and Hassard Short shared credits with passable score and lyrics of Walter Kent and Kim Gannon. Francis enjoyed show, but feared it seemed a faded nosegay. Critics of Newsweek, Time and New Yorker panned script for missing. Newsweek critic found parts of it friendly and wholesome, but not nearly as amusing as he expected. Time reviewer blamed music for having neither body nor soul. Lardner, New Yorker, placed fault directly on Benson book for not stimulating cast. In addition neither the songwriters, the director nor the actors make any special attempt to soak up the mood of the original novel.

N.Y.Critics in London

English theatre abounds with brave, impressive projects, reports Beaufort, Christian Science Monitor. But anticipated patronage from Festival of Britain visitors is nil, because most are tired after a day of sightseeing. The critic enjoyed the twin Cleopatras presented by the Oliviers and N.C.Hunter's Waters of the Moon. He found Alec Guinness' Hamlet misguided...Watts, Post, insists that the controversial production featured a masterpiece of acting by Guinness. The Post critic thinks that New York would have appreciated it more quickly, but he isn't sure enough to bet.

Strawhat Tryouts

The Fourposter-Jan de Hortog's new play starring Jessica Tandy and Hume Cronyn looked like a crackling combination of Coward and O'Neill to Sylvester, News, when presented at Westhampton, L.I. Playhouse.

Editorial Pros & Cons

Angels and producers refuse to try out stimulating productions on tired first night audiences in lukewarm "air conditioned" playhouses. And who can blame them? Maybe some day the science of real air conditioning as practiced in Broadway movie houses, will be willed to League of New York Theatres. Then something better than "summer entertainment" will be served at this season.

News & Notes

Shows that closed include Twentieth Century...Tom Donnelly, Washington News, submitted his new comedy The New Emotion to Jed Harris...Ned Armstrong, press agent, sold The Years Between to Bernard Hart...June issue of "Theatre Arts" sold out at news stands for the first time in magazine's 35 year history. July issue features coverage of Chicago theatre scene.

Copyright 1951 by T.M.Kraus 505 5th Ave., N.Y.17 MU 2-0326 $10 Yearly

' Key to NYC Criticism At A Glance '

1. NY Times
2. NY Herald Tribune
3. NY News
4. NY Mirror
5. NY Compass
6. NY Post
7. NY Journal American
8. World Telegram & Sun
9. Brooklyn Eagle
10. Newark News
11. Women's Wear Daily
12. Wall Street Journal
13. Journal of Commerce
14. George Jean Nathan
15. Ward Morehouse
16. Morning Telegraph
17. Variety
18. Billboard
19. Theatre Arts
20. New Leader
21. Freeman
22. Commonweal
23. Cue
24. Chr. Science Monitor
25. Sat. Review Lit.
26. Newsweek
27. Time
28. Nation
29. New Republic
30. New Yorker

Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them not if they think they will be hits. "So-So" means the critic did not state directly if he recommends the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening. Unless otherwise noted critics voted "pro."

AFFAIRS OF STATE-9/25/50.	- Con: 1-6-9-10-11-12-14-15-19-20-22-24-25-26-29. None: 16-21-23-28.
CALL ME MADAM-10/12/50.	- Con: 18-19-28-29. So-So: 3. None: 16-21.
COURTIN' TIME-6/7/51.	- Con: 1-4-10-18-23. So-So: 5-6. None: 14-15-19-20-21-22-25-29.
GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES-12/8/50.	- Con: 6-28. So-So: 14-18-22-23-27. None: 21-25.
GRAMERCY GHOST-4/23/51.	- Con: 1-2-4-5-6-10-11-14-17-22-25-26-27-30. None: 13-15-16-19-20-21-23-24-28-29.
GUYS AND DOLLS-11/24/50.	- Con: 28.
THE HAPPY TIME-1/24/50.	- Con: 5-6-15-19-26-27-28-30. None: 10-21.
THE KING AND I-3/29/51.	- Con: 28. None: 19.
KISS ME KATE-12/31/48.	- Con: 29. None: 21-28.
MAKE A WISH-4/18/51.	- Con: 1-5-6-12-14-23-24-27-28-29-30. None: 19-21-25.
THE MOON IS BLUE-3/8/51.	- Con: 14-19. None: 21-25-28.
OKLAHOMA-5/29/51.	- None: 19-20-21-22-25-26-27-28-29-30.
THE ROSE TATTOO-2/3/51.	- Con: 4-6-7-14-19-21-24-25-27. So-So: 8. None: 12-20-22.
SEASON IN THE SUN-9/28/50.	- Con: 9-11-20-24-28. So-So: 10. None: 7-13-15-16-21.
SEVENTEEN-6/22/51.	- Con: 2-4-7-26-27-30. None: 19-20-21-22-24-25-28-29.
SOUTH PACIFIC-4/8/49.	- Con: 27. So-So: 23. None: 5-9-10-12-14-20-21-28-29.
STALAG 17-5/8/51.	- Con: 4-20-23-28-30. So-So: 3. None: 19-21.
A TREE GROWS IN BROOKLYN-4/19/51.	- Con: 2-7-14-18-20-25-27-28. None: 15-19-21.

' TV & Radio Notes '

Whitney Bolton, Morning Telegraph, panel member on CBS TV Guest House theatre quiz featuring Oscar Levant as moderator...Jerry Franken, TV editor of Billboard, resigned to join Lester Lewis TV Productions...Tony Martin and Martha Raye first two subs for ABC Walter Winchell...NBC bidding for one time presentation of South Pacific ...Billie Worth and Donald Burr may do a "Mr. & Mrs. Midnight TV Show."...Celanese Corporation to sponsor "Playwrights' TV Theatre"...WCFM, Washington, D.C. will broadcast installments of Paul Green's Faith of Our Fathers, outdoor historical drama..."Actors Studio" TV program planned by Elliott Roosevelt and Richard Harrity...WOR TV Curtain Calls, starring Ethel Colby, Journal of Commerce, bowed off after three Sunday broadcasts...Shuberts renting space at their Ft.Lee, NJ, studios to TV producers.

' Green Room Department '

ANTI-NATHAN...Profile of George Jean Nathan by Charles Angoff in recent "Park East" drew a Nathan-like letter from "Revolted Playwright." The critic was charged with setting back the theatre untold years by his constant carping and criticisms. Like his fellow parasites, he approaches each play and actor in a frame of mind to see how much fault can be found. Those who bemoan the sad state of theatre mind can look to the critics for the answer. Stop heaping praise, the letter concludes, on these non-creative scavengers.

WINCHELL TIPS...Treasury department checking the two to three million take of New York ticket scalpers...Equity has blackballed a producer for allegedly free handed auditioning technique with actresses...Make a Wish management shouldn't haggle over $5.00 difference per week to singers; they can charge it off as income tax deductions.

NEW YORK & LOS ANGELES...For the first time in years motion picture Eastern play scouting departments are paying off, Variety survey finds. Film companies have financial interest in six current Broadway productions, and are open for deals in the fall. Popular device is granting musical rights to straight plays they own. Paramount and 20th Century Fox are the most active.

TALENT IDEAS...Why doesn't some TV network give Dorothy Sarnoff, The King and I, a show of her own, suggests Kenny, Mirror...Smart TV scouts wouldn't miss Gloria Patrice and Peter Conlow in Courtin' Time, recommends Francis, Billboard in tabbing them as a promising pair of youngsters.

WARFIELD OBITS...Eighty-four year old actor who passed away has already won his place in hearts of present generation of theatre fans and professionals, Time and World Telegram & Sun editorials agree. Though he hadn't appeared on the stage for over 27 years his influence as a great character of the theatre is well known. Without pointing any fingers, Sobol, Journal American, cited Warfield as perfect proof that those who love the theatre never tire of their roles. The actor appeared in only five different plays during his long Broadway career.

PUN OF THE WEEK...Now that operetta star Irene Bordoni is in the musical based on the James Michener stories, why not call it "Strauss Pacific" asks, Phillips, WT&S.

SUMMER WORKOUTS...Critics covering the summer circuit these days have to work for their free tickets. Watt, News, acted as messenger for an actress in dire need of a wig in a hurry at the Lambertsville, N.J., Music Circus. Rice, Post, played the role of apprentice at Berkshire, Mass, Playhouse before he was allowed to see the play. But Sylvester, News, has a much easier life, thanks to his $250 investment in the Westhampton, LI, Playhouse. Among other things the money allows him "loudmouth privileges". See Page One for reviews of summer tryouts.

' Theatre News Round Up '

Robert E. Sherwood will dedicate Winant House in London, America's present to Festival of Britain...Estelle Loring received settlement from Rodgers & Hammerstein for replacing her in South Pacific Chicago company...Joe E. Brown has added a curtain call routine to Courtin' Time...Martha Scott replaces Sarah Churchill in Gramercy Ghost... Martha Stewart subs for Vivian Blaine, Guys and Dolls, while latter makes Hollywood film...John Golden was honored by ASCAP, on his 77th birthday for co-founding the music organization...Morris Carnovsky will teach his technique to a class of professional actors at 436 West 22nd Street...Stalag 17 has been added to course in Living Theatre seminar given at Columbia University.

' Interview Hi-Lights '

VICTOR JORY...Season in the Sun actor believes that most thespians use the Stanislavsky technique without being aware of it, he told WNBT Ben Grauer. Actually only students approach a role with any given technique in mind. The actor should greet his role with as much energy and freedom at his command. Then by analyzing and working with the character a feeling is developed.

GODDARD LIEBERSON...Columbia Records executive hopes to bring out more theatre albums of past musicals, Hawkins, WT&S, learned. Because of the high expense involved they are waiting to see how the public takes to the first batch. Included are Mary Martin singing selections from Girl Crazy and Babes in Arms, plus a complete recorded version of Porgy and Bess done by the City Center Opera Company.

MARCIA FARRELL...Singer now making rounds of outdoor musical shows almost became a top golfer, MBS Sardis discovered. The South African girl, who celebrated her fifth anniversary in this country, came with the idea of being an actress. But when she broke 100 the first time on a golf course she was encouraged to turn pro. After a year or so in the national tournaments she was offered a job in the Miami Musical Circus. Now she is enroute to the Louisville outdoor opera.

' Digests of Past Hits '

Saint Joan, the Shaw historical drama which will receive its third professional production on Broadway by the Theatre Guild this fall, has been a favorite of most of the critics through the years. The new production, due October 4, will be directed by Margaret Webster and will star Uta Hagen. Katharine Cornell was the last to play it on Broadway, in 1936.

The 1923 Theatre Guild production of the long drama was greeted with rave reviews by a majority of the critics. Alexander Woolcott found the play beautiful, engrossing and exalting. Though he agreed with most who felt it could have been shortened without hindering the script. Winifred Lenihan was starred, and the supporting cast included Frank Tweed, Ernest Cossart, Morris Carnovsky and William M. Griffith. Young Jo Mielziner, who later designed scenery for the 1936 Katharine Cornell revival, was bitterly panned by several of the critics in his minor role as a court page. John Corbin, Times, Ludwig Lewisohn, Nation, and Stark Young, New Republic, agreed that script and acting gained in retrospect. While looking at it they were downright bored but looking back at it they found that all of the diverse parts fit together. Several suggested that no mortal actress could do full justice to the part as Shaw wrote it. Dissenters included George Jean Nathan, then writing for his own American Mercury, Gilbert Seldes, Dial and Percy Hammond, Herald. Nathan pointed out that for average playwright script would have been masterpiece, but for Shaw it was a flop. Other critics who praised it included Heywood Broun, World, Stephan Rathbon, Globe, and Walter Pritchard Eaton, Sun.

' Legit Stuff '

George Brandt settled dispute with ATPAM...Ticket Code and Dramatist Guild talks continuing with League of New York Theatres...Edith Atwater has opened a property shop at 773 First Avenue...Gilbert Miller will present the Oliviers in their twin productions of Antony and Cleopatra and Caesar and Cleopatra in the fall...Saint Subber and Lemuel Ayers, Kiss Me Kate producers, have dissolved their partnership...Show of the Month will start baby sitting service, giving free matinee tickets monthly to sitters.